

# Carry On

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She never even made it onto the ARK. Gerald was all alone.

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A/N:

Sorry if this is a little awkward, as I wrote it on my phone. ^^  
Just putting a small idea that came to me into words.

This story is a part of the multiverse of The Promise, the Echoes of Eternity series, but you don't need to read that story to understand this one.

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## *Echoes of Eternity: Offshoot*

"It's a real shame, what happened to your son."

In the darkness, a tiny speck of light flared up, leaving a trail of wispy smoke in its wake.

"And your granddaughter, too."

The smoke trailed up towards the stars, hazing over the lights that, in another world, had given a little girl hope. "Yes."

Though his consolations fell on aloof ears, the man continued, not sure how to stop. "I'm sorry it had to be like that for Jayden."

"Like..." Gerald exhaled a puff of smoke, his words a challenge, "what?"

"I-I... How he..."

"It's okay. You can say it." The professor sighed and leaned against the cold walls of an even colder house, now empty and dark. "He took a magnum 12-gauge shotgun and blew his brains out. And, well, I don't blame him. I gave him hell for so long, and this life didn't treat him much better."

For a moment, the universe held its breath, until Gerald broke the silence again. "This world..." He took a long drag off his cigarette, "was not good enough for Jayden."

The man looked askance at his partner scientist. "You smoking again?"

Gerald chuckled darkly. "What does it matter now?"

The silence wrapped around them like a snake, suffocating.

The man brushed his silver hair out of his eyes. "It was good of you to take care of Maria for a little while."

"I suppose."

"It was."

"It was silly to get so attached to her, knowing how sick she was." The light flickered. "But it's better for her this way."

"What do you mean?"

"Now," Gerald sighed, "She'll never have to experience the horrors this world has to offer. And for a girl in her position... I'm certain that there would have been many."

The professor's coworker smiled. "Sometimes, hope can overcome even the most horrible of things."

Gerald exhaled, a shadow of a smile on his face. "Why do I feel like that's something she would have said?"

"Who knows." The man shrugged and grinned. "Maybe in another timeline, she did."

Gerald stubbed out his cigarette and considered lighting another one. "I don't believe in all of that."

"I do. I've seen it."

"Seen *what?*"

The two men shared a short laugh at their teasing. But Gerald's smile soon faded. In his mind's eye, a few smoky memories slipped through the cracks: memories of red, of screaming, of pain. A hiccup in an infinite timeline, giving him just a glimpse of what might have been, something he mostly passed off as dreams.

"I think," Gerald said, "I know just what you mean." He paused for a moment, turning these odd visions over in his mind. "... But maybe I just have a morbid imagination."

Gerald's friend glanced at him, but said nothing, putting out his cigarette. "Gotta get going. You gonna be alright, buddy?"

The professor glanced at his friend's house, illuminated from within, silhouettes passing by the windows. He looked back at his own dark home. Only ghosts wandered there now. "I'll be alright. Don't worry about me." The old man smiled grimly. "If I was going to off myself, I'd have done it the first time."

The man was about to disappear into the shadows, but he turned back at the last moment, looking like one of the many shadows that haunted Gerald. "What are you going to do now?"

Gerald turned his gaze to the twinkling stars. In the distance, a blue comet shot by, disoriented. He felt like someone was trying to tell him something, but he pushed the feeling away, his eyes falling to the ground again.

"I'm going to do what I've always done," he said. "I'll carry on."

A thousand miles away, in the vast reaches of space, she was listening. And she understood. That was what he would do. That was what they all had to do. Despite everything, she had to keep pushing on.

So, turning, she continued her wandering, searching for a place that had not shut her out.

And in the world she left behind, the world where she was only a fleeting memory of a child who never had a chance, Gerald carried on.